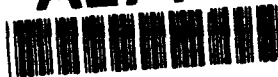


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**The Fall of South Vietnam:
An Analysis of the Campaigns**

**A Monograph
by
Major Gregory Heritage
Infantry**



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**School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

Second Term AY 92-93

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE 14 MAY 93	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED MONOGRAPH		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Fall of South Vietnam: An Analysis of The Campaigns		5. FUNDING NUMBERS		
6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Gregory M. Heritage, USA				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School of Advanced Military Studies ATTN: AT2L-SMV Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900 Com (913) 684-3437 Autovan 552-3437		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER		
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE		
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) SEE ATTACHED				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Strategic Situation model of military misfortune Campaigns		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 52		
		16. PRICE CODE		
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	

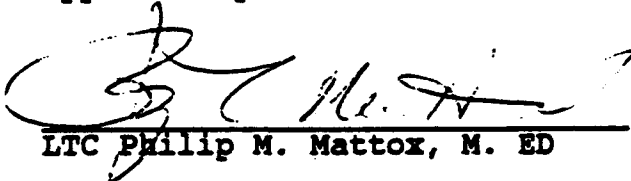
SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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Title of Monograph: The Fall of South Vietnam: An
Analysis of the Campaigns

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Accepted this 14th day of May, 1993

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 8

Accession For	
NTIS	CRA&I <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC	TAB <input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced <input type="checkbox"/>	
Justification	
By	
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Availability Codes	
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ABSTRACT

THE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAMPAIGNS

This monograph addresses what operational level military factors enabled the North Vietnamese Army to defeat the former South Vietnamese Army during the Vietnam War's final campaigns of 1975. The Vietnam War covered the full spectrum of conflict from terrorism, to guerrilla warfare, to a conventional war of maneuver. The final North Vietnamese offensive that defeated the South Vietnamese Army were conventional campaigns that provide opportunities for operational level planners to learn from the Vietnam experience.

The methodology followed in the monograph involves first establishing a basis of information on the strategic situation and the final campaigns, and then analyzing the campaigns with Cohen and Gooch's model of military misfortune.

The communists began their final offensive campaigns in December, 1974 by seizing Phuoc Long Province. In March, 1975, they continued their offensive campaigns by conducting diversionary attacks in the north threatening Pleiku and then attacking the lightly defended South Vietnamese rear area. The Communists quickly captured the Central Highlands and then raced to the sea to divide the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN). The communists blocked the South Vietnamese attempt to retrograde from the Central Highlands and destroyed the ARVN II Corps. The communists then concentrated combat power to destroy the South Vietnamese six divisions isolated in the north. After destroying these divisions, the communist seized Saigon which ended the war.

The South Vietnamese suffered a catastrophic failure and lost the war because of their inability to learn, anticipate, and adapt. The South Vietnamese, failing to learn the basics of operational art, tried to defend the entire country through corps area defenses. Thus, they never defended in depth or concentrated combat power to defeat their adversary's main effort. Further, their air force, under the control of army corps commanders, never conducted an air campaign to mass air power and interdict the communist offensive forces. By failing to anticipate a major communist offensive, the South Vietnamese never prepared adequate defensive plans. Lack of planning and ineffective command and control arrangements left the South Vietnamese unable to adapt to the communists offensive tempo. Due to the South Vietnamese leadership's inability to learn, anticipate, and adapt, they endured a catastrophic defeat.

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INTRODUCTION

Our defeat in Vietnam was only a temporary setback after a series of victories. It is vital that we learn the right lessons from that defeat. In Vietnam, we tried and failed in a just cause. No more Vietnams can mean that we will not try again. It should mean that we will not fail again.

Richard Nixon

The American experience in the Vietnam War was a tragedy for the American people. In economic terms, the war cost more than 300 billion dollars; costs which continue to rise today for hospital care and dependent benefits.² U.S. material losses included 4865 helicopters, 3720 aircraft, and a significant amount of American equipment provided for the one million man South Vietnamese Army, Air Force, and Navy.³ Most importantly, the war was a human tragedy for the approximately 2,594,000 American soldiers who served in Vietnam: 57,702 died and 313,616 were wounded including 10,000 who lost at least one limb.⁴ Unrecorded is the emotional distress suffered by those who had family members killed, wounded, or lost in action.

The Vietnam War was also a tragedy for the people of South Vietnam who suffered immensely as a result of the conflict. The South Vietnamese lost 185,528 soldiers killed and 499,026 wounded during the war.⁵

Upon conquering South Vietnam, the communists executed thousands of those who opposed their rule and moved more than one million people to reeducation camps.⁶ Many more South Vietnamese died in these camps and all suffered from excessive physical labor with little food while undergoing intensive political indoctrination.⁷ More than 1,200,000 people fled in boats from communist Vietnam, and the number of these people who drowned on the high seas remains unknown.⁸ The American and South Vietnamese people both suffered immensely from this war.

Hence, this war deserves special attention and study by American military soldiers so that the political and military mistakes which created so much suffering are never repeated. There remains much to learn from this war. Operations during the conflict covered the full spectrum from terrorism, to guerrilla warfare, to a conventional war of maneuver. The final North Vietnamese offensive that conquered South Vietnam were conventional force campaigns.

During these final campaigns, the North Vietnamese leadership demonstrated exceptional abilities at the operational level of war. Operational art is defined as,

the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations.⁹

The North Vietnamese achieved their strategic goal of unifying Vietnam under a communist government during their final offensive in 1975. This final offensive consisted of the Phuoc Long, Tay Nguyen, Hue and Danang, and Ho Chi Minh campaigns. These carefully designed, organized, and linked campaigns achieved their desired military endstate which was the defeat of the South Vietnamese Army. These skillfully conducted campaigns provide opportunities for today's operational level planners to learn from the Vietnam experience.

Accordingly, this monograph addresses the question: what operational level military factors enabled the North Vietnamese Army to rapidly defeat the former South Vietnamese Army during the Vietnam War's final campaigns of 1975? The methodology followed in the monograph involves first establishing a basis of information on the strategic situation and the final campaigns, and then analyzing the campaigns using Cohen and Gooch's model of military misfortune to determine the reasons for ultimate failure.

THE STRATEGIC SITUATION

The U.S. Government began secret peace negotiations with the North Vietnamese in August of 1969, resulting in the Paris peace agreements of January, 1973.¹⁰ However, the Vietnam War continued

despite the Paris peace accords as the South Vietnamese forces continued their life or death struggle against the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). In fact, the South Vietnamese Army averaged more than 1,000 combat deaths and 8,000 to 10,000 hospital admissions per month after the signing of the peace accords.¹¹ The increased casualty rates occurred because combat intensified as the nature of the war changed to a conventional conflict between large military forces.¹² The peace accords did not end the Vietnam War, but rather ended America's direct role in the fighting.

As America withdrew from its military involvement, the Soviet Union and China provided vast military and economic aid that allowed the North Vietnamese Army to increase its military might. In December, 1974, the Chief of the Soviet Armed Forces, General Viktor Kulikov, visited North Vietnam to endorse its offensive plans against South Vietnam and to promise additional military aid.¹³ In 1973 and 1974, North Vietnam received a total of 6.3 million tons of aid from their communist allies including 85% of their oil and 100% of their heavy weapons.¹⁴ China also deployed 50,000 engineering troops to North Vietnam to keep the transport system operational.¹⁵ Thus, the North Vietnamese rearmed and strengthened their army.

In contrast, the United States abandoned the South

Vietnamese by severely reducing military aid. General Westmoreland wrote,

Despite the long years of support and vast expenditure of lives and funds, the United States in the end abandoned South Vietnam. There is no other way to put it.¹⁶

General Westmoreland stated this because despite previous pledges to do so, the American Congress failed to replace South Vietnamese tanks, aircraft, and naval vessels destroyed in combat after January, 1973.¹⁷ Additionally, the American Congress drastically cut aid to South Vietnam as the table below illustrates.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Quantity of Aid</u>
1973	\$2,270 million
1974	\$1,010 million
1975	\$700 million ¹⁸

America significantly reduced military aid to South Vietnam just as the North Vietnamese, using external military support, began a significant military buildup.

By 1975, the loss of U.S. military aid severely limited the capabilities of the ARVN (The Army of South Vietnam, used interchangeably with the South Vietnamese Army). ARVN combat divisions averaged between 30-40% deadline rate for all equipment, including 35% of their tanks and 50% of their armored personnel carriers.¹⁹ Concurrently, ammunition shortages resulted in a 60% reduction in fire support capabilities.²⁰ Frontline South Vietnamese soldiers received one hand grenade and 85 bullets per month; the artillery ammunition

controlled supply rate was four rounds of 105mm, two rounds of 155mm, and three rounds of 175mm per day.²¹ Even the hospitals were so severely affected that bandages, surgical dressings, syringes, and needles had to be cleaned for reuse.²² Thus, the South Vietnamese Army's military capabilities decreased while the North Vietnamese became increasingly powerful.

Accordingly, the balance of power shifted to North Vietnam in 1974 as their military might increased. General Van Tien Dung, who commanded the North Vietnamese offensive forces that conquered South Vietnam, stated, "The war had moved into its final stage. The balance of forces had changed. We had grown stronger while the enemy had weakened."²³

Overall, the North and South Vietnam each had about the same size armies. However, the North Vietnamese fielded a 22 division force compared to the South Vietnamese 13 division force.²⁴ In other words, the North Vietnamese Army fielded more combat soldiers because the South Vietnamese Army had so many personnel supporting the war effort in combat service support fields.²⁵ Additionally, the North Vietnamese deployed more than 700 tanks and 400 medium artillery pieces to South Vietnam.²⁶ For the first time in the war, the North Vietnamese had significant firepower and mobility advantages over the South Vietnamese.

The balance of power shifted in Vietnam. The South Vietnamese, though still having a significant force to defend their country, were at a military disadvantage due to decreased American aid. The North Vietnamese, fully aware of their advantage, prepared for offensive operations. The communists eager to take advantage of the situation prepared one final test of American resolve to defend South Vietnam.

THE CAMPAIGNS

Phuoc Long Province Campaign

The North Vietnamese offensive which tested U.S. resolve to defend South Vietnam began on December 13, 1974. The NVA 301st Corps, consisting of the 7th Infantry Division, the 3rd Infantry Division, a tank battalion, an artillery regiment, an antiaircraft regiment, and sapper units, attacked to seize Phuoc Long Province.²⁷ One week prior to the main attack, the NVA conducted diversionary attacks to the west at Tay Ninh to confuse the South Vietnamese. Following these diversionary attacks, the NVA 7th infantry division attacked towards Bo Duc, Don Luan, and Phuoc Long City while the 3rd Infantry Division attacked to seize Duc Phong, and Phuoc Long City (see appendix A).

The NVA forces rapidly isolated the defenders of Phuoc Long Province by severing Route 14 that served as

the defender's line of communication. The NVA then attacked Phuoc Binh airstrip with artillery to prevent resupply or reinforcement. To complete the isolation, the communists eliminated ARVN artillery support by destroying fire support base Bunard. The South Vietnamese forces became surrounded and incapable of providing mutual support with only seven days supply of ammunition.²⁸ Next, the NVA concentrated combat power to destroy each of the surrounded South Vietnamese garrisons.

The South Vietnamese initially decided not to reinforce Phuoc Long Province in an attempt to save their surrounded troops. Lieutenant General Du Quoc Dong, the III Corps commander responsible for defending the province, decided to use his few reserve battalions to stop the enemy's attack on Tay Ninh.²⁹ The South Vietnamese President, Nguyen Van Thieu, refused to deploy the strategic reserve which consisted of the airborne and marine divisions because he feared an attack on Saigon. The South Vietnamese Joint General Staff (JGS) finally obtained approval for the deployment of forces to aid their isolated garrison at Phuoc Long City. On January 5, 1975, 250 rangers from the 81st Airborne Rangers air assaulted into the province.³⁰ The Rangers, who lacked artillery, tank, and air support were quickly defeated and were never

able to reach Phuoc Long City.

The South Vietnamese surrendered Phuoc Long City on January 6, 1975 after enduring massive artillery barrages and tank attacks. With the loss of this city, Phuoc Long became the first province to fall to the North Vietnamese. The South Vietnamese paid a heavy price for their failure. Only 850 of the 5,400 South Vietnamese defending the province returned. There were 4,550 South Vietnamese killed, wounded, and captured. The Rangers also suffered, with 165 casualties out of the 250 soldiers deployed.³¹ The political price for this defeat was ever greater than the human cost.

The Phuoc Long Province campaign was a political test of U.S. resolve to support South Vietnam. General Westmoreland, Commander of American forces in Vietnam, wrote, "The attack in Phuoc Long was a test to gauge American reaction."³² The North Vietnamese leadership tested American resolve to help their ally. America's failure to respond during the communist seizure of Phuoc Long Province encouraged Hanoi's leadership to proceed with other offensive operations. Due to internal political dissention about the Vietnam War, America failed to assist South Vietnam during the Phuoc Long Province battles. The U.S. reaction consisted of sending the aircraft carrier Enterprise towards Vietnam and alerting the 3rd Marine Division on Okinawa.³³

This limited American response did not impress the battle hardened North Vietnamese leadership. Instead, the North Vietnamese became encouraged by this limited response and prepared to continue offensive operations. General Van Tien Dung notes,

The victorious Route 14-Phuoc Long campaign was most significant, marking a new step toward collapse for the Saigon forces...This victory also gave a clearer indication of United States designs and their ability to intervene in South Vietnam...That victory strengthened the strategic determination...and provided an additional impetus to gain a great victory when the opportune moment came.³⁴

The NVA finished preparations for the Tay Nguyen Campaign after concluding that the U.S. lacked the necessary resolve to intervene and defend South Vietnam.

Tay Nguyen Campaign

The NVA intended to conquer the Kontum, Gia Lia, Phu Bon, Dar Lac, and Quang Doc provinces during the Tay Nguyen Campaign.³⁵ The NVA regional forces, militia, and guerrilla forces attacked simultaneously nationwide intending to fix defending forces thus allowing the regular forces to concentrate combat power against key objectives.³⁶ Beginning March 1, 1975, NVA diversionary attacks struck the defending outposts west of Pleiku to draw defending forces away from Ban Me Thuot (see appendix B).³⁷ The South Vietnamese found themselves besieged nationwide and unsure of their

enemy's main effort.

The NVA designated the Central Highlands and the seizure of Ban Me Thuot as the main effort.³⁸ The Central Highlands became the main effort because this area was key terrain. By seizing the Central Highlands, the NVA could march to the sea, separate South Vietnam into two portions, and isolate the South Vietnamese Army. Ban Me Thuot became the main attack because occupying the city allowed the control of Route 21. Further, the city served as the 23rd ARVN division's command and logistical centers. The NVA realized that by seizing Ban Me Thuot and then blocking Route 19, they could sever the defending force's lines of communications within the Central Highlands.³⁹ Once again, the NVA sought to isolate and then destroy their enemy.

The South Vietnamese forces remained unprepared for the communist onslaught. Within the Central Highlands, the South Vietnamese had the 23rd division, seven ranger groups, and four armor groups deployed in defensive positions primarily concentrated near Pleiku.⁴⁰ Only two South Vietnamese battalions guarded Ban Me Thuot. The South Vietnamese II Corps commander, Major General Pham Van Phu, responded to the diversionary attacks by reinforcing Pleiku.

To reinforce Pleiku, the ARVN defenses at Ban Me

Thuot were weakened. The communists thereupon attacked and rapidly seized the city. The NVA isolated the Central Highlands by interdicting the major routes into the area and by March 9, surrounded Ban Me Thuot. At 0200 hours on March 10, the NVA 316th and 10th Infantry divisions, augmented with tanks and heavy artillery, attacked Ban Me Thuot from the south while the NVA 320th Division attacked from the north.⁴¹ The NVA attacking with infantry and tanks seized the city on March 12.

On March 14, the South Vietnamese unsuccessfully counterattacked to retake Ban Me Thuot. The South Vietnamese air assaulted the 45th Infantry Regiment, one battalion of the 44th Regiment, and one Ranger battalion to a landing zone near the city.⁴² This force, lacking tank, artillery, and air support, rapidly retreated after an initial defeat.

Following the loss of Ban Me Thuot, President Thieu ordered South Vietnamese forces to conduct a withdrawal that would abandon the Central Highlands. President Thieu realized he had insufficient forces to defend everywhere, and he decided to trade space for time.⁴³ President Thieu intended to withdraw his northern forces to counterattack Ban Me Thuot. Concurrently, South Vietnamese forces would set up coastal enclaves around Hue and Danang to defend these

areas."⁴⁴ However, the concept proved unrealistic due to relentless communist attacks.

The NVA attacked north towards Pleiku and the 320th NVA division attacked southeast towards the coastal town of Tuy Hoa. The capture of Tuy Hoa would separate South Vietnam into two portions and divide the South Vietnamese Army.

Hue and Danang Campaigns

Facing the threat that the communists would divide their Army, the South Vietnamese began withdrawing from the Central Highlands on March 16. The withdrawal quickly became a rout. More than 200,000 civilians attempted to flee the communists and the withdrawal route became crowded with vehicles and people.⁴⁵ Further, the NVA interdicted all escape roads except Route 7B. This route was inadequate because of overgrown vegetation and several broken bridges which required repairs. Regardless, the South Vietnamese forces tried to withdraw along Route 7B. Communist forces reacted rapidly by blocking the route while the NVA 320th division attacked the rear of the withdrawing column.⁴⁶ Thus, an orderly withdrawal soon disintegrated into panic.

As panic gripped the South Vietnamese Army, the communists exploited their success and captured Hue and Danang (see appendix C). The NVA 324B and 325C

divisions surrounded and isolated Hue by March 24, 1975.⁴⁷ Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong did not understand President Thieu's intent to hold Hue at all costs and he ordered the city abandoned on March 25.⁴⁸ With Hue captured, the NVA isolated the coastal city of Danang with four divisions. The South Vietnamese unsuccessfully tried to evacuate their I Corps by sea but saved only 16,000 soldiers.⁴⁹ Danang fell on March 29 without much of a fight.

By early April, 1975, the South Vietnamese had lost much against the communist offensive. At Danang alone losses included numerous tanks and artillery, hundreds of tons of ammunition, 180 aircraft, and 70,000 regular and territorial soldiers.⁵⁰ Overall, the South Vietnamese lost six divisions and two-thirds of their country's territory.⁵¹ This destruction of so much of the South Vietnamese Army established the conditions for the communists advance on Saigon.

Ho Chi Minh Campaign

Xuan Loc was one of the cities that stood between the NVA forces and Saigon. Xuan Loc was a pivot of maneuver dominating a vital road network which controls Route 1 and Route 20 that lead to Saigon (see appendix D & E).⁵² The South Vietnamese forces fought heroically to defend Xuan Loc. Initial communist attempts in early April to seize Xuan Loc had failed

and on April 9 the communist assaulted again. The NVA committed more than three divisions involving over 40,000 troops to seize Xuan Loc.⁵³ The South Vietnamese 18th Division, augmented with a regiment from the 5th Division, and the 1st Airborne brigade fiercely defended Xuan Loc, repulsing the communist attacks for two weeks.⁵⁴ When the communist tank and infantry frontal attacks proved unsuccessful, they enveloped the defender's positions from both sides. The defenders, facing encirclement, conducted a retrograde.⁵⁵ The NVA seized Xuan Loc on April 21, thereby opening the road to Saigon.

The NVA surrounded Saigon, a city of about 3.5 million people covering 1,845 square kilometers, with sixteen divisions.⁵⁶ The communist commander, General Dung, intended to seize the city by simultaneously assaulting five major terrain objectives: General Staff headquarters, Independence Palace, Special Capital headquarters, Directorate-General of Police, and the Tan Son Nhut Airfield.⁵⁷ The NVA intended to strike simultaneously from several directions at these decisive points within Saigon and then attack outward to destroy remaining defensive positions (see appendix F).

The NVA attacked at 0500 hours on April 30, 1975.⁵⁸ The South Vietnamese Army rapidly

disintegrated, providing only minimal resistance. Communist units quickly reached the Presidential Palace. The new South Vietnamese president Duong Van Minh, President Thieu had resigned on 21 April, tried to surrender the country. The NVA Colonel, who seized the Presidential Palace, stated to Doung Van Minh, "You cannot give up what you do not have."⁵⁹ And so the Vietnam War ended, yet for so many the suffering had only begun.

These final communist campaigns which ended the Vietnam War were carefully designed and linked through their aims. The aims of the Phuoc Long campaign included threatening Saigon, opening lines of communications for future offensive operations, and testing American resolve. The Phuoc Long campaign proved that the NVA could conduct further offensive operations because the U.S. refused to reinforce South Vietnam. Further, the NVA presence in Phuoc Long Province threatened Saigon. Thus, the South Vietnamese strategic reserve remained near Saigon and did not move to reinforce during the Central Highland battles. The Tay Nguyen campaign aims included seizing the Central Highlands and cutting South Vietnam in half thus dividing the South Vietnamese Army. The Tay Nguyen campaign established the conditions for the Hue and Danang campaign.

The primary aim of the Hue and Danang campaign was the destruction of the South Vietnamese armed forces isolated in the north during the previous campaign and to capture territory in the process. The destruction of six ARVN divisions during the Hue and Danang campaign established the initial conditions for the Ho Chi Minh campaign. The aim of the Ho Chi Minh campaign was to end the war by successfully capturing the enemy's capital and destroying the remaining forces. The campaigns were closely linked through their aims as each campaign established the conditions for continued offensive operations. Analyzing the successes and failures of these campaigns provides learning insights about the operational level of war.

CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS/TEACHING POINTS

In the book Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War, Eliot Cohen and John Gooch developed a model to analyze military failures. The authors assert that there are three basic kinds of failures: failure to learn, failure to anticipate, and failure to adapt.⁶⁰ The failure to learn is defined as the failure to learn accessible lessons from recent history. The failure to anticipate involves the inability to foresee and take responsible measures to counter an enemy move, or counter the enemy's response

to one's own initiatives. Failing to adapt involves the inability to cope with unfolding events. Thus, learning failures involve the past, anticipatory failures involve the future, and adaptive failures involve the present.⁶¹ Cohen and Gooch describe an aggregate failure when two of these failures occur simultaneously. A catastrophe failure results when all three failures occur simultaneously.

To analyze a specific situation to determine types of military failure, Cohen and Gooch follow a five step process.⁶² The first step involves asking what exactly the failure was. Next, one must determine the critical tasks that went unfulfilled and then conduct a layered analysis to examine the behavior of different levels of the organization. This layered analysis provides the information necessary to develop an analytical matrix that presents graphically the key problems which led to the failure. After this detailed analysis, the final step seeks to determine the larger causes of the military failure.

The Cohen and Gooch model of military misfortune applies to the fall of South Vietnam because by using the five step process one recognizes that the South Vietnamese suffered a catastrophic failure due to their inability to learn, anticipate, and adapt.

The key failure in the campaigns was the inability

of the South Vietnamese leadership to perform at the operational level of war. Because of this failure they did not properly defend their country. The South Vietnamese Army, over one million men strong, certainly had the capability to defend their country. Regardless, the communist successfully lured ARVN forces to the north and then attacked the rear areas. The communists captured Ban Me Thuot and then raced to the sea, thus separating the ARVN. The communists destroyed the ARVN divisions in the north and then concentrated forces to seize Saigon ending the war. The offensive tempo overwhelmed the South Vietnamese. Except for Xuan Loc, ARVN forces failed to defend their country; this remains the overpowering reason for their defeat.

The next step of the process involves determining the unfulfilled critical tasks. The South Vietnamese failed at least six critical military tasks: intelligence acquisition, defense, attack, retrograde, interdiction, joint operations, and command and control. First, the ARVN failed in intelligence acquisition as the communists achieved surprise during their offensive.⁶³ Next, the campaign synopsis clearly shows that the ARVN did not defend successfully except at Xuan Loc. Further, the ARVN did not effectively attack using combined arms as shown by its

counterattacks at Phuoc Long Province and Ban Me Thuot that lacked artillery, armor, and air support.

Next, the ARVN conducted a poorly organized retrograde that resulted in the destruction of its II Corps. The communists destroyed the II Corps in part because the South Vietnamese did not effectively use their air force to interdict communist forces. Also, the South Vietnamese Navy and Army did not successfully conduct joint operations, so that II Corps army units became trapped in Danang. Finally, the South Vietnamese did not exercise effective command and control and never combined the efforts of their land, sea, and air forces.

After identifying the unfulfilled key critical tasks, the next step in the analytical model involves identifying the layers of command. Once this is accomplished, it will be possible to conduct a layered analysis of behavior at each level within the ARVN. President Thieu dominated the South Vietnamese strategic and operational levels of command. In fact, the four South Vietnamese corps commanders reported directly to him.⁶⁴ Thus, President Thieu served as the strategic and operational level commander during these final campaigns while the corps commanders were constrained to conducting only tactical level operations.

The layered analysis results in the analytical matrix that identifies key issues at the different levels of command:

	<u>President Thieu</u> <u>Strategic/Operational</u>	<u>Corps Cdrs</u> <u>Tactical</u>
<u>Critical Task</u>		
Intelligence Acquisition	Failed to detect communist offensive forces and never warned subordinate commanders.	Failed to conduct sufficient reconnaissance.
Defend	Inadequate planning; Insufficient reserves. Lacked defense in depth.	Inadequate planning. Lacked reserves.
Attack	Failed to concentrate combat power at decisive points.	Inability to conduct combined arms operations.
Retrograde	Conceptually flawed. Failed to provide adequate resources. Inadequate planning.	Failed to break contact with enemy. Inadequate planning.
Interdict	Failed to use Air Forces, maneuver, SOF forces to attack communist LOCs.	Failed to conduct deep operations.
Joint Operations	Navy and Army fail to extract forces from Danang.	Ineffective coordination.
Command and Control	Failed to control corps. Failed to combine efforts of Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Forces.	Failed to control assigned units.

After conducting an analysis to identify the failure, the unfulfilled critical tasks, the command

layers, and the analytical matrix, the final step involves determining the underlying causes for the fall of South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese did not learn, anticipate, and adapt, and so they suffered a catastrophic failure which resulted in utter defeat.

Failure to Learn

The effective use of air power is essential in modern military operations. John A. Warden, a contemporary air force planner, writes,

Air superiority is a necessity. Since the German attack on Poland in 1939, no country has won a war in the face of air superiority, no major offensive has succeeded against an opponent who controlled the air.⁶⁵

Indeed, the South Vietnamese military leaders had an opportunity to learn this lesson during the 1972 North Vietnamese offensive. The North Vietnamese began their assault on March 30, 1972, committing twelve divisions and approximately 150,000 soldiers in a multi-divisional three prong attack.⁶⁶ American and South Vietnamese forces effectively integrated air power and defeated the attack, inflicting severe North Vietnamese casualties.⁶⁷

During the communists 1975 offensive, the South Vietnamese still had air superiority. The South Vietnamese Air Force, though forced to retire ten squadrons due to declining U.S. support, still had 56 squadrons and retained significant air power advantages

over their enemy.⁶⁸ The South Vietnamese, therefore, had the capability to inflict severe enemy casualties with air power.

Yet despite this capability, the South Vietnamese ineffectively used their air force and air power played an insignificant role in the final defense of South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese never effectively used their air power to conduct interdiction operations because army corps commanders controlled air force assets and prioritized close air support operations.⁶⁹ Furthermore, due to poor ground to air communications, close air support sorties were often wasted.⁷⁰ The air force leaders lacked the authority to interdict communist forces without the approval of the army's corps commanders.⁷¹ Consequently, the air force never initiated an air campaign to interdict the North Vietnamese Army. Further, because the army commanders controlled the air assets, the air force never could mass against the enemy main effort. The South Vietnamese leaders did not recognize the necessity for massing their air power to successfully interdict the enemy forces. Thus, the South Vietnamese Air Force remained ineffective during the final life or death struggle.

During these final battles, the South Vietnamese Army attempted to defend everywhere and so they failed

to defend effectively anywhere. Sun Tzu wrote,

When the enemy disperses and attempts to defend everywhere he is weak everywhere, and at the selected points many will be able to strike his few.⁷²

President Thieu directed a military strategy that forbid the surrender of territory.⁷³ To follow this strategy, his commanders attempted to defend everywhere by establishing static forward defenses in their area of operation. In essence, throughout the country, ARVN defended well forward with area defenses, but did not prepare a defense in depth.⁷⁴ Thus, ARVN leaders violated the principle of economy of force by defending everywhere and only preparing a linear defense that could never withstand a determined assault by massed conventional forces.

Accordingly, the ARVN could not concentrate combat power during the campaigns. The South Vietnamese defended their country by establishing four military regions (see appendix G). Military region 1, defended by I Corps, encompassed the five northern provinces. Military Region 2, which II Corps defended, included the Central Highlands provinces and much of the coastline. Military Region 3, defended by III Corps, encompassed Saigon and most of the military logistic and training bases. Military Region 4, defended by IV Corps, in the south contained 16 of the nation's 44 provinces, half of the nation's population, and most of

the rice crop.⁷⁵ Each corps commander defended his area of operation, so the ARVN became dispersed throughout the countryside.

The South Vietnamese learned over the years that this corps defensive concept was effective against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese limited attacks. However, by 1972 the nature of the war had changed to a conventional war of movement. It then involved communist corp size forces conducting multi-divisional attacks. The South Vietnamese, failing to understand the impact of the war's changing nature, did not alter their defensive concept from an area defense to a mobile defense. Due to the different nature of the war, the South Vietnamese corps could no longer simply defend in their respective areas. The communists concentrated forces at decisive points and threatened to overwhelm South Vietnam's territorial integrity. Thus to defeat the concentrated enemy forces, the South Vietnamese required a mobile defense, which would have enabled them to mass their combat power to destroy the enemy. When the communists attacked simultaneously throughout South Vietnam in December, 1975, all of the ARVN corps were engaged concurrently. Each corp commander competed for assets to defend his respective area of operation. Consequently, the South Vietnamese did not concentrate combat power against the enemy's

main effort. The South Vietnamese leadership learned the wrong lessons from their experience and did not adapt to the changing threat.

As the ARVN conducted a linear defense, the South Vietnamese leadership made another fatal mistake by designating an inadequate reserve.⁷⁶ Thus, the entire defense lacked the flexibility to react against a concentrated communist attack. Of their thirteen divisions, the South Vietnamese designated only the Airborne and Marine Divisions as reserve. The South Vietnamese did not analyze the enemy situation thoroughly. The communists kept a strategic reserve of seven divisions, and they attacked using infantry divisions augmented by heavy artillery and tank regiments.⁷⁷ The two division South Vietnamese reserve was too small to stop a concentrated attack by the enemy's strategic reserve. Additionally, the light airborne and marine forces lacked the combat power to stop a determined assault by enemy armor units. Thus to allow flexibility and stop a concentrated enemy attack, the South Vietnamese required a multi-division reserve augmented with tank brigades. Moreover, in reality the South Vietnamese actually did not keep any of their divisions in reserve. President Thieu, fearing an attack from Phuoc Long Province, kept the airborne division to guard Saigon and the marine division

quickly became engaged after the communist offensive began. In summary, the South Vietnamese tried to defend everywhere, lacked a defense in depth, and failed to designate an adequate reserve.

The communists were well prepared to take advantage of their enemy's many mistakes. U.S. Army doctrine states, "A dependable, uninterrupted logistics system helps commanders seize and maintain the initiative."⁷⁸ The communists built an extensive logistical infrastructure to allow continuous support of their offensive operations. In over three decades of war, the communist built an extensive logistic infrastructure of roads. Over 20,000 kilometers of roads allowed them to supply their forces fighting in South Vietnam.⁷⁹ In addition to the Ho Chi Minh trail, the communists completed another road system in 1975 to ensure rapid reinforcement and resupply of their forces (see appendix H). These extensive road networks, travelled on by more than 10,000 Soviet and Chinese trucks, allowed the communist to achieve greater mobility than their adversary. Thus, they achieved tactical interior lines although they operated on strategic exterior lines. In addition, they built a petroleum pipeline that extended more than 5,000 kilometers through streams, rivers, and mountains.⁸⁰ By extending telecommunications lines into South

Vietnam, communist battlefield commanders could talk directly with leaders in Hanoi.⁹¹ Using this logistical infrastructure, the communists stockpiled supplies to support their attacking army. The communist clearly understood that successful campaigns require continuous logistical support.

Using this logistical infrastructure, the communists enveloped the South Vietnamese armed forces. One South Vietnamese general stated that,

The collapse of South Vietnam was nothing but a succession of successful envelopments...Communist strategy, very simple in nature, had not really changed in 1975, but execution had been made easier and more effective, thanks to the new sophisticated net of roads. This strategy could be called a strategy of indirect approach, if we were to use Liddell Hart's terminology. It consisted of making a frontal attack with a relatively small force to fix ARVN units, while executing a deep envelopment in the rear to isolate the big cities and cut off the main lines of communication.⁹²

The communist road networks extended from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia. This access through Laos and Cambodia created an assailable flank allowing the communists to concentrate forces for attack anywhere along the western border of South Vietnam. Thus, due to the communists access to Laos and Cambodia, South Vietnam became strategically enveloped.

Having accomplished this, the communist attacked the rear of the South Vietnamese Army. U.S. Army doctrine states that,

The attacker may also fix the defender's attention forward through a combination of fires and supporting or diversionary attacks, while he maneuvers his main effort to strike at the enemy's weak flanks and rear.⁸³

The communists followed this doctrine closely. They conducted diversionary attacks in the north along the demilitarized zone while the communist main effort maneuvered along the flank to attack the South Vietnamese rear at Ban Me Thuot.

The communists then conducted tactical maneuver to envelop and isolate South Vietnamese units. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the overall Commander of the North Vietnamese Armed Forces, writes, "During these campaigns our army carried out very extensively the strategic splitting and large-scale encirclement of the enemy forces."⁸⁴ The communists isolated South Vietnamese forces defending the Central Highlands by blocking the major road networks. The communist then isolated the South Vietnamese garrisons and destroyed each one in detail. Following these successes, the communists advanced to the coast to cut the ARVN northern division's lines of communications. Thus, the communists isolated the South Vietnamese Army by separating the six divisions in the north from the seven ARVN divisions in the south. After separating the South Vietnamese Army, the communists then destroyed the isolated ARVN divisions in the North

before concentrating forces to attack south towards Saigon. The communists had learned well during their thirty years of war, and proved highly skilled at isolating and destroying their enemy.

Similarly, they proved skillful at concentrating their combat power. Clausewitz wrote, "The best strategy is always to be very strong; first in general, and then at the decisive point."⁵⁵ The communists skillfully concentrated combat power at decisive points. During the Tay Nguyen Campaign, they seized the decisive point of Ban Me Thuot. The communists considered Ban Me Thuot decisive because the city controlled a major road and served as the 23rd ARVN Division's command and logistical center.

To seize Ban Me Thuot, the NVA concentrated their forces to achieve significant force advantages: 5.5 to 1 in infantry, 1.2 to 1 in tanks, and 2.1 to 1 in artillery.⁵⁶ The South Vietnamese defending the city could not withstand the concentrated communist attack. Another example is the seizure of Saigon. The communists concentrated sixteen divisions to isolate and then seize Saigon in a simultaneous attack. The communist had learned well from their extensive combat experience and concentrated combat power to achieve decisive victory.

Failure to Anticipate

Operational level planners must understand the political situation and how politics affect their military operations. Clausewitz wrote,

One country may support another's cause, but will never take it so seriously as it takes its own. A moderately-sized force will be sent to its help; but if things go wrong the operation is pretty well written off, and one tries to withdraw at the smallest possible cost.¹⁷

The South Vietnamese miscalculated U.S. resolve. By failing to understand the changing American domestic political situation, the South Vietnamese mistakenly believed that American forces would intervene if the communists conducted a major offensive. President Thieu anticipated American intervention because President Nixon had promised him in writing, "You have my absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory action."¹⁸

However, the political situation changed in America as President Nixon resigned and Congress became increasingly reluctant to support the continuing Vietnam War. Even after American military aid dwindled and the North Vietnamese seized Phuoc Long province without invoking a U.S. response, the South Vietnamese leadership still expected that American forces would intervene to protect their country. The South Vietnamese did not anticipate that the U.S. government would in the end write South Vietnam off.

The South Vietnamese also did not anticipate their adversary's response. They miscalculated communist capabilities and intentions and did not adequately prepare to defeat a major ground offensive. President Thieu anticipated two possible enemy courses of action. The most probable course of action envisioned the communists employing a strategy of subversion to gain control of South Vietnam.⁹⁰ The second course of action saw a limited objective communist offensive to secure some South Vietnamese territory until U.S. forces intervened.⁹⁰ President Thieu thought that following U.S. intervention, the communist would try to conduct negotiations while consolidating their gains. The South Vietnamese, not really expecting a large scale communist offensive, did little to prepare against this threat.⁹¹ The South Vietnamese underestimated their enemy's capabilities and intentions, so the communist offensive achieved complete surprise.

Since the South Vietnamese never really expected a major communist offensive, they never prepared proper defensive plans. Sun Tzu writes, "Now the supreme requirements of generalship are a clear perception...a profound strategy coupled with far reaching plans."⁹² Despite Sun Tzu's advice, inadequate planning permeated the South Vietnamese at

all levels of command and became a major factor for their rapid defeat.

The Joint General Staff (JGS) plan assigned individual corps the responsibility to defend their military regions. Although the JGS plan specified tasks to corps that included protecting the people, pacification responsibilities, and road security requirements, the JGS plan lacked guidance to counter a full scale communist offensive.⁹³ The JGS plan did not concentrate the corps' combat power to destroy the enemy offensive forces. Instead, the plan dictated that each corp commander defends his own area of operations.

Accordingly, the corp level plans lacked guidance for an all out communist attack. Specifically, the corp level plans directed that if a full scale communist attack occurred, the JGS would provide reinforcements.⁹⁴ However, as has already been shown, JGS lacked adequate reinforcements to block a full scale enemy attack. Thus, the South Vietnamese plans did not provide guidance based on a sound concept of the operations, had no branches and sequels, and lacked detailed provisions. Consequently the South Vietnamese, who did not conduct contingency planning, could not adapt to the rapid communist offensive tempo.

In contrast, the communists showed exceptional operational level skills. Operational art involves

deciding fundamental issues about when, where, and for what purposes to conduct battle.⁹⁵ The communist correctly determined when and where to concentrate combat power to attack enemy weaknesses. General Giap wrote,

In choosing the directions and targets for our attacks we correctly aimed at the vital points of the enemy. These vital points were in most cases places where the enemy was weak or relatively weak.⁹⁶

The NVA attacked enemy weakness such as the exposed flank and rear of the South Vietnamese Army. Additionally, the NVA skillfully created weakness by shaping conditions on the battlefield. During the Tay Nguyen Campaign, communist diversionary attacks west of Pleiku convinced the ARVN II Corps commander, General Phu, to reinforce Pleiku. When he did, a weakness developed in the ARVN's defense because only two battalions were left to defend Ban Me Thuot. The communist then seized Ban Me Thuot and began their march to the sea. Thus, by anticipating their enemy's reaction, the communists created the conditions to attack successfully.

Failure to Adapt

Following the communist attack, the stunned South Vietnamese leaders did not adapt and act decisively.⁹⁷ The South Vietnamese did not effectively command and control their forces because they lacked an effective

command structure. President Thieu was both South Vietnam's President and operational level commander. He did not appoint a subordinate leader to command land, sea, air, and special operation forces. Also, he did not appoint a air component commander. Moreover, he served as the land force commander and directed corps operations.

As the operational level commander, President Thieu made complicated military decisions without first conducting a formal decision making process. He also lacked competent military advice because he did not have an effective Joint General Staff (JGS). President Thieu, constantly fearing a military coup, selected JGS members based on political reliability and not military competence.⁹⁸ Consequently, this politically reliable staff lacked the military talent to assure national survival. Without an effective command and control structure and a competent Joint General Staff, the South Vietnamese could not adapt to the communist offensive.

Absent effective command and control, the South Vietnamese also could not adapt to the communist's offensive tempo. U.S. Army doctrine states that, "Tempo is the rate of speed of military action; controlling or altering that rate is essential to maintaining the initiative."⁹⁹ The South Vietnamese lost and never

regained the initiative. After the communist seized Ban Me Thuot, they began marching to the sea to divide the South Vietnamese Army. President Thieu, forced to react, radically altered his declared strategy of no territorial surrender and ordered the withdrawal of ARVN forces in the Central Highlands. He ordered the withdrawal on March 14, 1975, giving the South Vietnamese forces only two days to prepare for the operation.

With little time to prepare, the South Vietnamese withdrawal became a military disaster. Jomini wrote,

Retreats are certainly the most difficult operations in war...When we think of the physical and moral condition of an army in full retreat after a lost battle, of the difficulty of preserving order, and of the disasters to which disorder may lead, it is not hard to understand why the most experienced generals have hesitated to attempt such an operation. ¹⁰⁰

Jomini described what occurred in South Vietnam as the withdrawal resulted in a military catastrophe. The ARVN II Corps of 165,000 troops tried to withdraw with no planning or preparation.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, the communists isolated the Central Highlands by blocking the major routes so that only route 7B remained open. This route was insufficient for a corps withdrawal due to poor road conditions, overgrown vegetation, and many downed bridges.

Regardless, the South Vietnamese attempted to withdraw along this route. The South Vietnamese did not

plan for the nearly 200,000 refugees who soon fled and blocked route 7B. The communists, sensing an opportunity, reacted swiftly by blocking the road and attacking the retreating column. They destroyed about 75% of the ARVN II Corps: including 15 of the 18 combat battalions, 75% of the logistic and support units, the six Ranger groups, and all of the armor and artillery units.¹⁰² The South Vietnamese, with neither an effective command and control structure or an effective Joint General Staff, made critical decisions without a sound decision making process. Accordingly, horrendous casualties resulted.

While the South Vietnamese reeled in disarray, the communists continued to press their attack. U.S. Army doctrine states,

The attacker presses successful operations relentlessly to prevent the enemy from recovering from the initial shock of the attack, regaining equilibrium, forming a cohesive defense, or attacking in turn.¹⁰³

The communists pressed their successful attack to prevent the South Vietnamese from recovering and establishing an effective defense. As the South Vietnamese tried to withdraw, the communists blocked their escape and then destroyed the ARVN II Corps. Next, the communists exploited their success by concentrating combat power to destroy the ARVN divisions trapped in the North, thus creating the

conditions to attack Saigon. They then concentrated sixteen divisions to isolate and quickly seize Saigon. By adapting quickly, the communists took advantage of the South Vietnamese mistakes.

The communist operational commander, General Van Tien Dung, adapted by designing specific tactics to take advantage of the South Vietnamese defensive dispositions. In Sun Tzu's words, "Thus, one able to gain victory by modifying his tactics in accordance with the enemy situation may be said to be divine."¹⁰⁴ Dung changed his tactics to conform to his enemy by designing the blossoming lotus tactics that struck the enemy nerve center and then attacked outward.¹⁰⁵ Dung's troops bypassed the city's perimeter defenses and surprised defenders by striking at the command and logistic centers in the center of the city. The communists would then attack outward from inside the city, like a blossoming flower, to destroy the defensive positions from an unexpected direction. Thus, the NVA adapted to take advantage of every opportunity and skillfully destroy their enemy.

Further, the communists developed effective strategy and military plans by focusing their efforts on the South Vietnamese center of gravity. General Dung identified the South Vietnamese armed forces as the operational center of gravity. General Dung wrote,

The basic law of the war was to destroy the enemy's armed forces, including manpower and war material...the main target of our forces was the (South Vietnamese) regular army.¹⁰⁶

After identifying the South Vietnamese armed forces as the center of gravity, Dung designed his campaigns to destroy these forces. To destroy the South Vietnamese Army, the communist marched to the sea and divided the South Vietnamese Army by isolating the six ARVN divisions defending in the north. During the Hue and Danang campaign the communist concentrated combat power to destroy these ARVN divisions.

After destroying these six ARVN divisions, the communists recognized that the South Vietnamese center of gravity had shifted. U.S. Army doctrine states,

In both planning and execution, we must continually reappraise our analysis concerning centers of gravity; these can shift during the course of a campaign. They do so as a result of unilateral decisions made by the enemy commander or as a direct result of friendly operations.¹⁰⁷

As a result of friendly operations which were the communist successes during the Tay Nguyen and Hue and Danang campaigns, the ARVN was severely attrited and demoralized. Consequently, the South Vietnamese center of gravity shifted from the armed forces to the capital city of Saigon. The center of gravity shifted as the South Vietnamese Army became so demoralized after losing six divisions and two-thirds of their country, that the seizure of Saigon would break their will to

fight and thereby end the war. General Dung wrote that he knew,

that when we struck our most powerful, most decisive blow to liberate Saigon-Gia Dinh, then all the remaining enemy troops in the Mekong Delta must sooner or later lay down their arms and surrender.¹⁰⁸

The NVA created the necessary conditions for success by attriting, defeating, and demoralizing the defending forces, to strike a fatal blow at the capital city. They showed skill at the essence of operational art by massing resources against the enemy's main source of power to destroy it.

CONCLUSIONS

These campaigns provide valuable insight for studying the operational level of war. The communists demonstrated exceptional skill at operational logistics, deception, and maneuver. Communist leaders developed an extensive logistical infrastructure in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos that allowed continuous supply for offensive operations. They used operational deception to fix South Vietnamese attention towards the north and then attacked the lightly defended South Vietnamese rear areas. The communists skillfully enveloped and divided the ARVN. After dividing their enemy, the communist concentrated combat power to destroy the isolated ARVN units. Next, the communist exploited their success by pressing the fight and never

permitting their enemy the time to reestablish a defense. The communist leadership, after thirty years of war, demonstrated exceptional operational abilities.

In contrast, the South Vietnamese leadership committed grievous operational errors. By attempting to defend everywhere, they failed to defend in depth and to concentrate combat power at decisive points. Furthermore, without a strong reserve, their defense lacked flexibility. Lacking flexibility and an effective command and control structure, they could not adapt to the communist offensive tempo. The South Vietnamese leadership tried to adapt to the communist offensive tempo by ordering a withdrawal that soon became a rout. The South Vietnamese leadership, failing to accurately perceive the political or tactical situations, demonstrated an inability to conduct the operational level of war.

These campaigns show the requirement for an effective air campaign in modern warfare. The South Vietnamese did not effectively integrate their air force to conduct an air campaign. This occurred primarily because army commanders controlled the air force assets. The air force assets should be centralized under one commander. This commander can then mass air power against the enemy main effort and interdict their lines of communications. The air

campaign must become an integral part of an overall plan unifying the efforts of the nations's armed forces.

To achieve this unity of effort, effective command and control is essential. The Vietnam experience indicates that political leaders exercising command at the operational level seldom contribute to effective military operations. Instead, political leaders should designate an overall military commander with authority to integrate army, navy, marine, and air forces. This unified command can then plan campaigns and conduct joint operations that concentrates combat power at decisive points.

With the skillful commitment of twenty two divisions, North Vietnam launched a series of campaigns that utterly routed the South Vietnamese armed forces, ending the Vietnam War. These final campaigns provide valuable insights about the operational level of war. General Antoine Henri Jomini wrote, "Military history, accompanied by sound criticism, is indeed the true school of war."¹⁰⁹ This war and these campaigns deserve special consideration, analysis, and criticism, so that the mistakes of the Vietnam War are never repeated.

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Field Manual 100-20 Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict. Washington DC: HQ Department of the Army., 1990.

Field Manual 100-5 Operations. Draft., January, 1993.

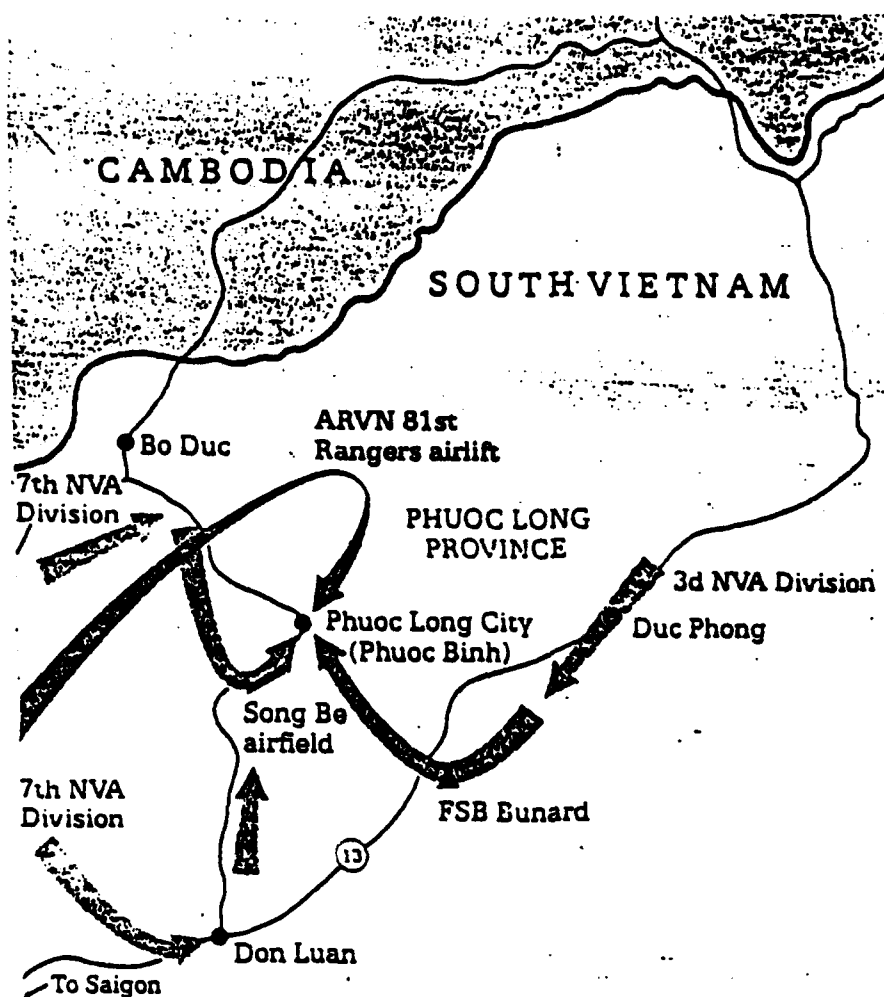
Journals

Matthews, Lloyd, J., Assessing the Vietnam War A Collection from the Journal of the U.S. Army War College. New York: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers., 1987.

After Action Reports

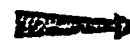
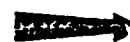

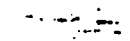
The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army 1950-1972. Washington DC: Department of the Army., 1974.

Appendix A:



Battle for Phuoc Long Province

December 1974–January 1975

-  First NVA attacks
-  Second NVA attacks
-  ARVN airlift
-  Province boundary

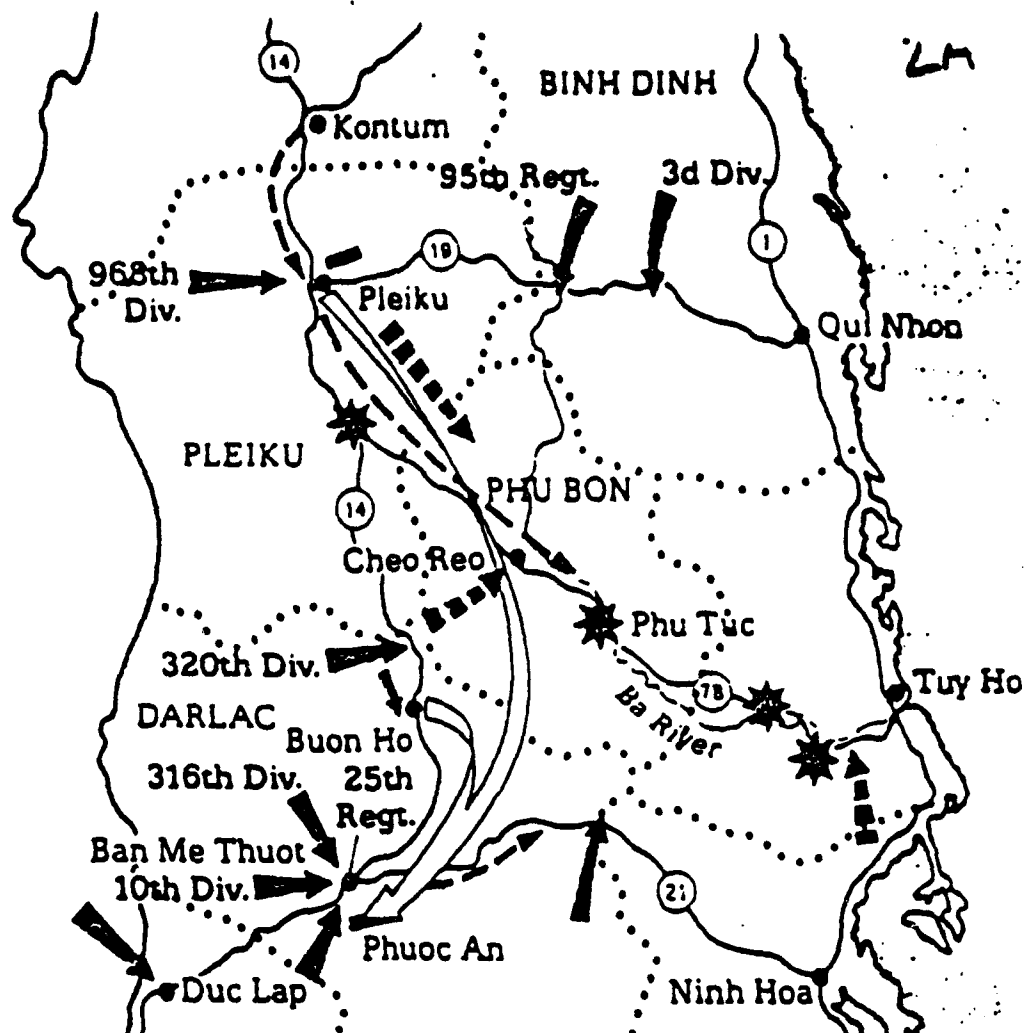


In the first phase of the 1975 offensive, shown on this map, the Communists pinched out the GVN salient in Phuoc Long Province and linked their supply routes north of Saigon.

Source:

Clark Dougen, The Fall of the South, (Boston, 1986) p. 16.

Appendix B:

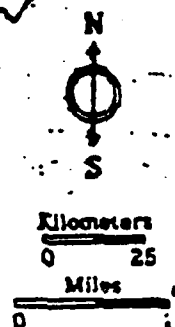


Battle for the Central Highlands

March 1975

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Communist attacks: | ARVN counterattack |
| Phase I | ARVN withdrawal |
| Phase II | Battles on Route 7 |
| Phase III | Airfield |
| Attack on ARVN convoy | Province boundary |

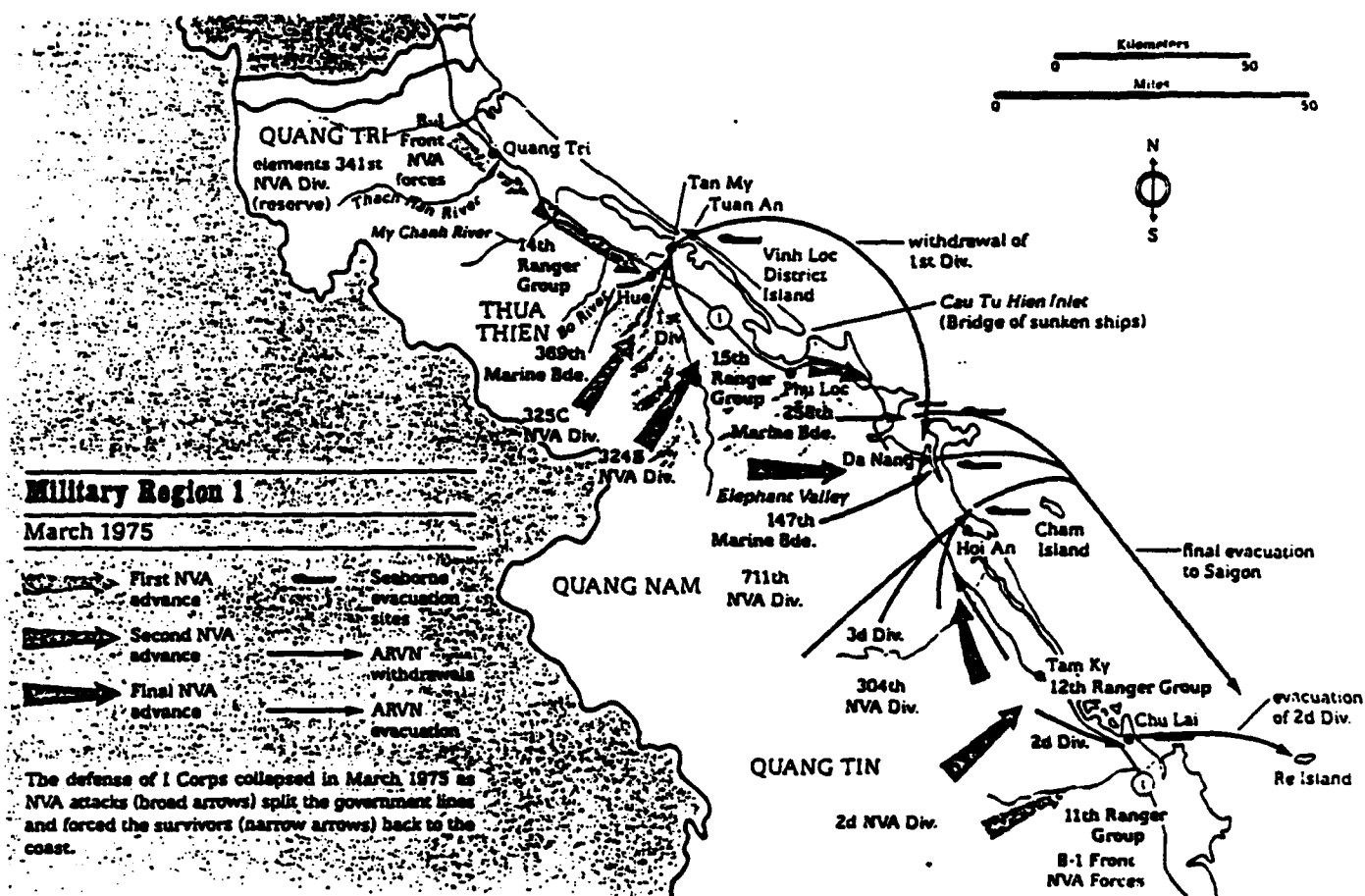
With routes to the coast cut and their positions outflanked by the North Vietnamese capture of Ban Me Thuot, II Corps withdrew along disused Route 7B where they were subsequently attacked at several points by the Communists.



Source:

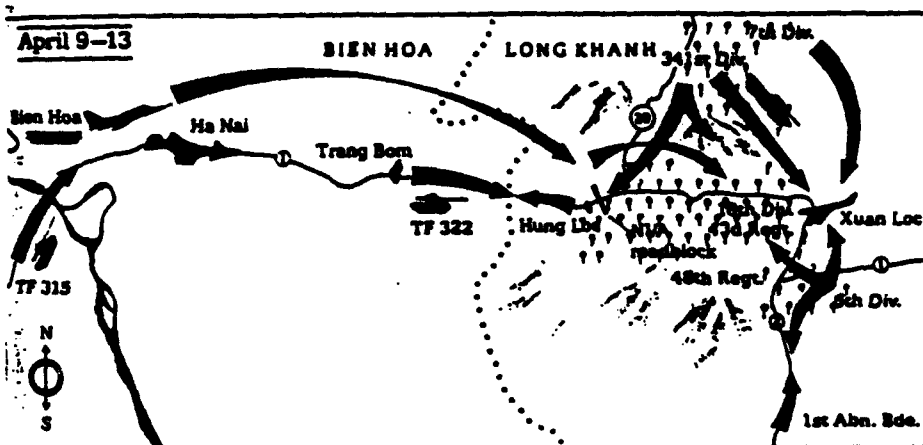
Clark Degen, The Fall of the South, (Boston, 1986) p. 50.

Appendix C:



Sources:

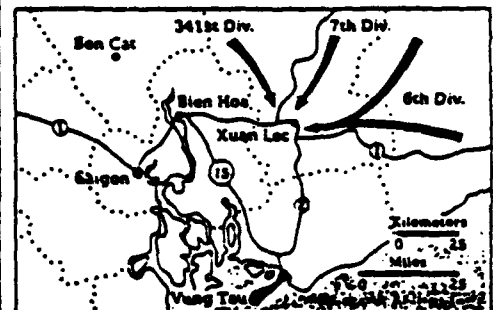
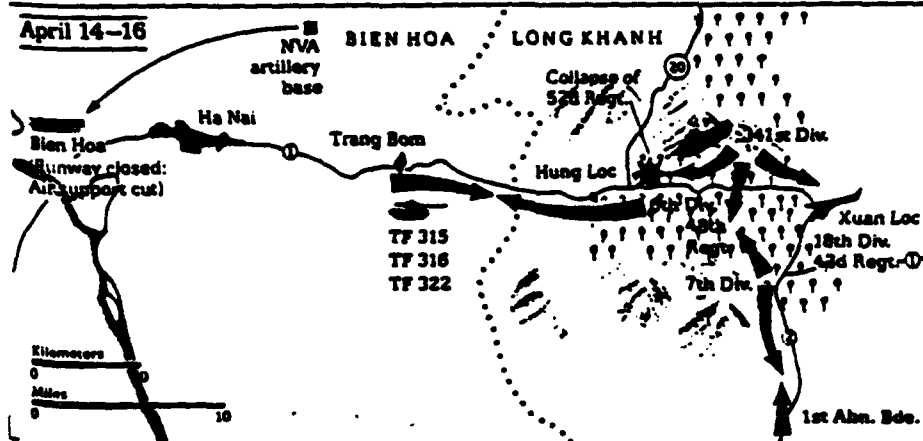
Clark Dugan, The Fall of the South, (Boston, 1986) p. 69.



The Battle of Xuan Loc April 9-21, 1975

- NVA assault
- NVA tank assault
- ARVN assault
- ARVN tank assault
- VNAF aerial assault
- ??????? Rubber plantations
- Provincial boundaries
- TF 322 South Vietnamese task force

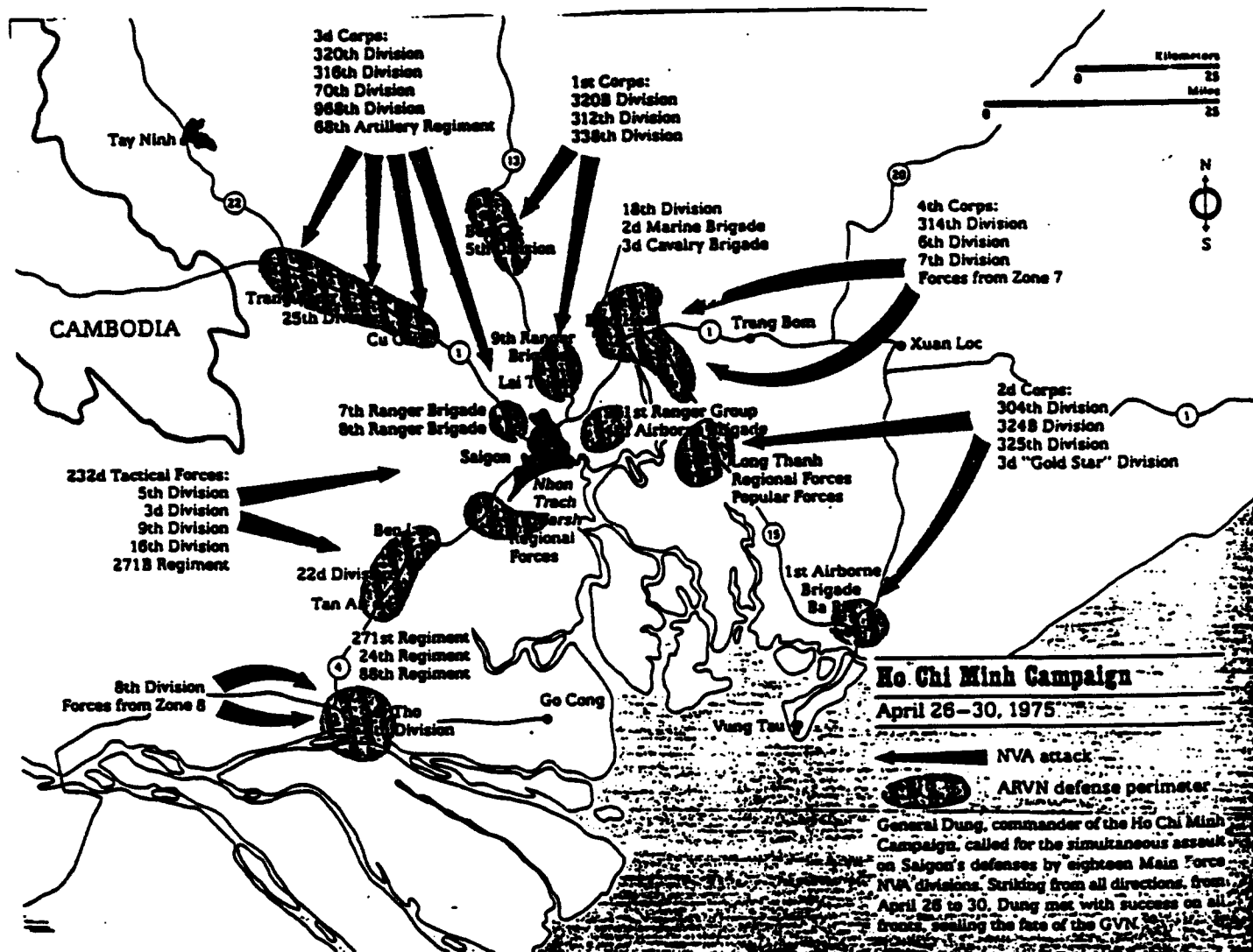
On April 9, 1975, three Main Force NVA divisions converged on the 18th ARVN Division at Xuan Loc, the bulwark of Saigon's defenses. There, the RVNAF used everything it had to try to stop the NVA advance. Out-numbered and surrounded, the 18th ARVN Division held on while the 1st Airborne and three armored task forces, with VNAF tactical support, tried to break through NVA lines. By April 16th the battle was turning in the NVA's favor and by April 20 Xuan Loc was abandoned.



Source:

Clark Douglas, The Fall of the South, (Boston, 1986) p.123.

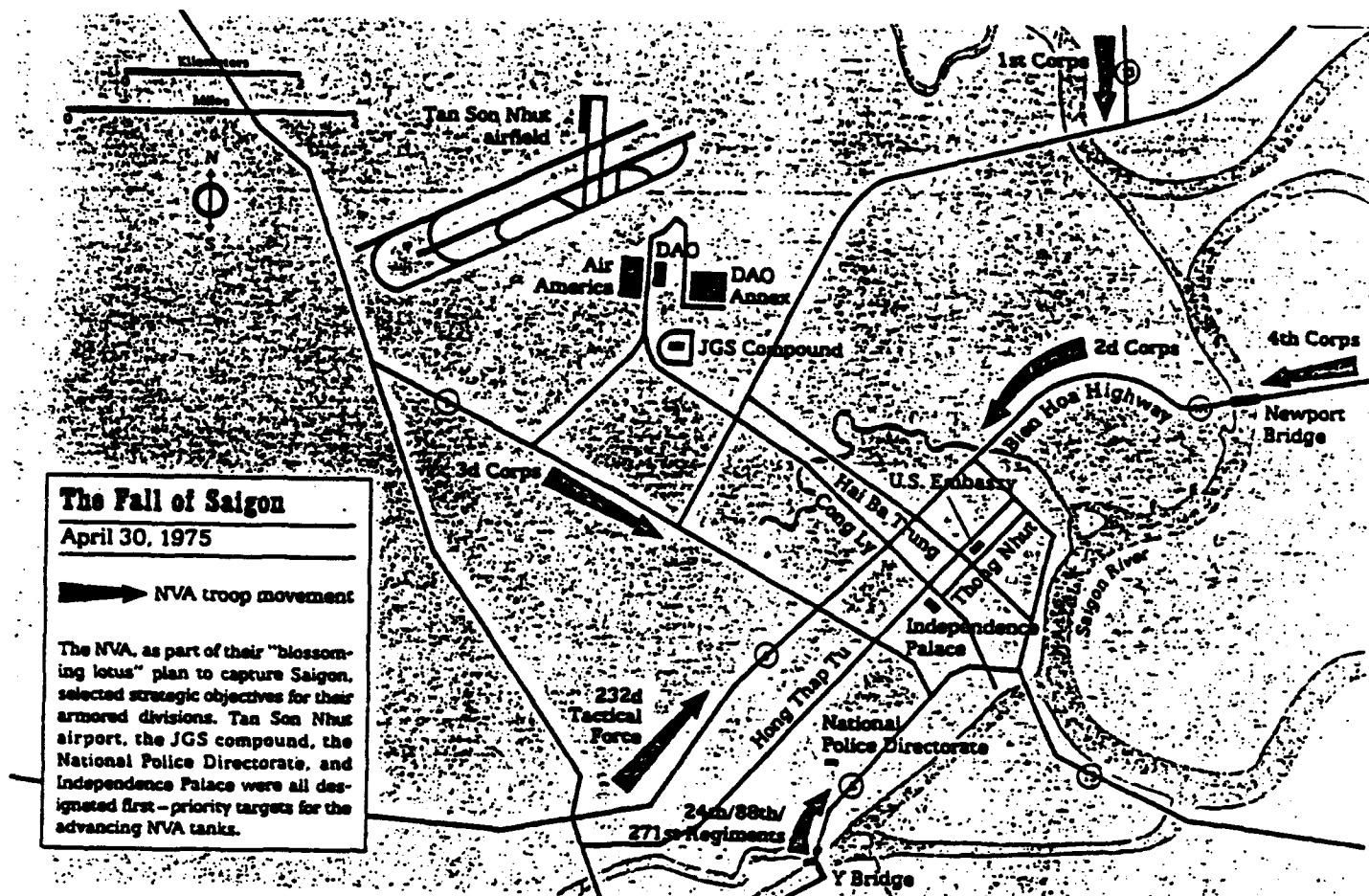
Appendix E:



Source:

Clark Douglas, The Fall of the South, (Boston, 1986) p.140

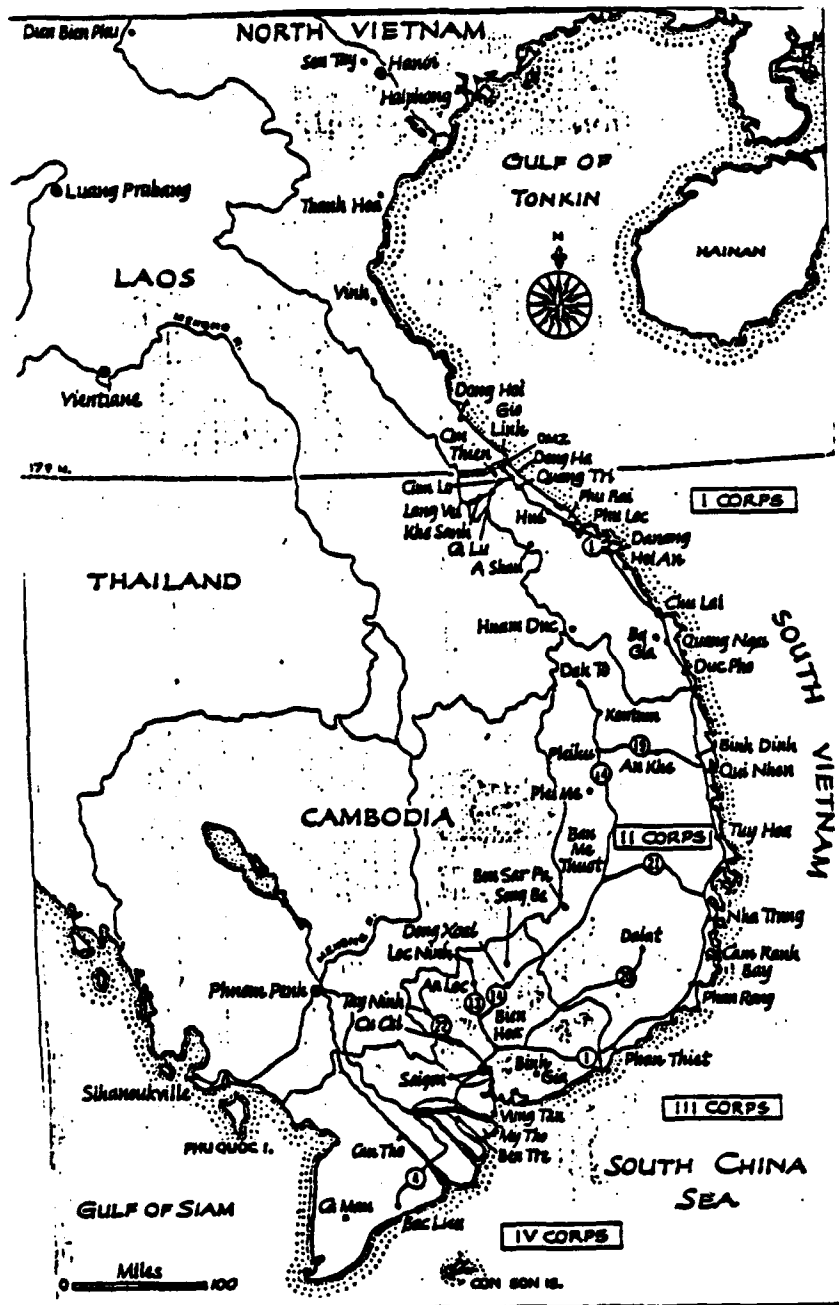
Appendix F:



Source:

Clark Douglas, The Fall of the South, (Boston, 1986) p. 161.

Appendix G:



Southeast Asia, showing Tactical Zones for I, II, III, and IV Corps

Source:

William Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, (NY, 1976) p.XIV.

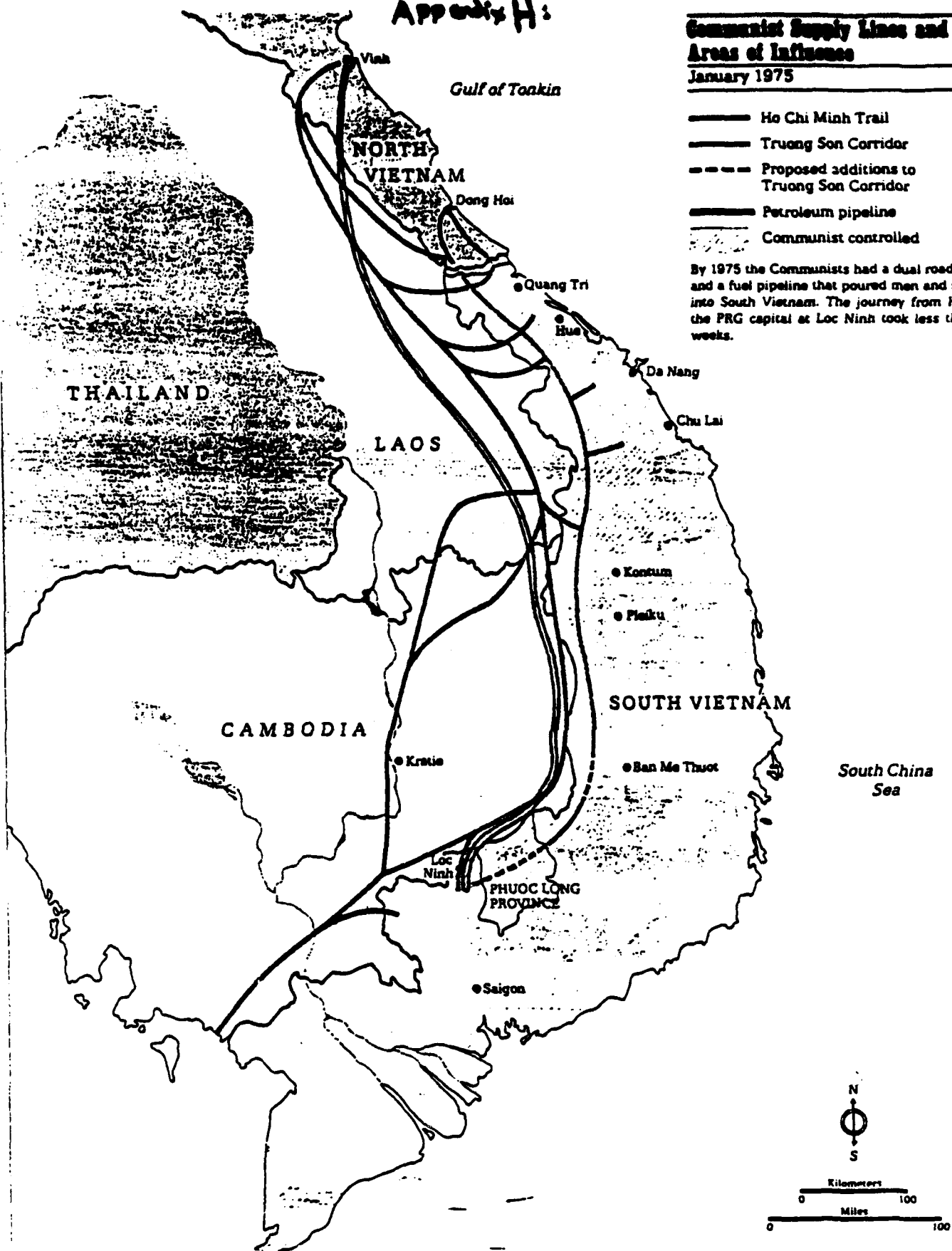
Appendix H:

Communist Supply Lines and Areas of Influence

January 1975

- Ho Chi Minh Trail
- Truong Son Corridor
- - - - Proposed additions to Truong Son Corridor
- ===== Petroleum pipeline
- Communist controlled

By 1975 the Communists had a dual road system and a fuel pipeline that poured men and supplies into South Vietnam. The journey from Hanoi to the PRG capital at Loc Ninh took less than two weeks.



Kilometers
0 100
Miles
0 100

Source:

Clark Dougan, The Fall of the South, (Boston, 1986) p.10.